

## **BRIDGING THE INTELLIGENCE GAP: SECURITY CHALLENGES, COMMUNITY COLLABORATION, AND STATE RESPONSE IN TARABA STATE, NIGERIA**

**Queen Yakubu Danko & John Mosese Maikomo**

**Department of Political Science and International Relation  
Taraba State University, Jalingo, Taraba State, Nigeria  
Email: queendanko@gmail.com**

### **Abstract**

This study examines the dynamics of insecurity and the intelligence gap in Taraba State, Nigeria, focusing on the nature and drivers of security challenges, the structural and operational limitations of intelligence gathering, and the effectiveness of government response mechanisms. Relying exclusively on secondary data drawn from academic publications, policy reports, and official statistics between 2014 and 2024, the study adopts a qualitative and thematic analytical approach. Findings reveal that insecurity in Taraba State is multidimensional manifesting through recurrent Tiv–Jukun communal clashes, farmer–herder conflicts, kidnapping, robbery, cultism, and political violence driven largely by poverty, unemployment, and weak governance. The analysis further shows that intelligence gathering in the state is undermined by political interference, inadequate funding, corruption, and poor interagency coordination, which collectively limit early warning and proactive response. Despite these challenges, the Taraba State Government has implemented measures such as the employment of youths as Special Advisers to reduce unemployment and the establishment of a Joint Integrated Intelligence Network (JIIN) across all sixteen local government areas to improve intelligence sharing. However, these interventions, though commendable, remain constrained by sustainability and institutional weaknesses. The study concludes that bridging Taraba’s intelligence gap requires a shift toward community-based, transparent, and technology-driven security governance that prioritizes youth empowerment, interagency coordination, and the depoliticization of security operations for sustainable peace and stability.

**Keywords:** *Security challenges, intelligence gap and community collaboration.*

### **Introduction**

Across Africa, insecurity has become a defining challenge of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. From insurgency in the Sahel to maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea, states struggle with violent extremism, organized crime, and communal conflicts. Nigeria, Africa’s most populous country, sits at the epicenter of these crises. Despite sustained investment in military and police reforms, insecurity persists, with cycles of violence spreading across the northeast, northwest, and Middle Belt. Scholars agree that weak state institutions, corruption, porous borders, and socio-economic marginalization drive insecurity (Aning & Pokoo, 2014; Williams, 2016). Yet one factor that remains understudied is the persistent *intelligence gap* a structural deficiency in collecting, analyzing, and using timely information to prevent threats.

In West Africa, the intelligence gap is aggravated by the transnational nature of threats. Terrorist networks, trafficking syndicates, and cross-border militias exploit weak intelligence-sharing systems to evade detection. Nigeria illustrates this problem vividly. Although the state has multiple security institutions the Department of State Services (DSS), Nigerian Police Force, Civil Defence Corps, and the military their operations are often reactive, fragmented, and detached from grassroots realities. Local knowledge, particularly from traditional leaders

and community groups, is frequently ignored, even though such knowledge could provide early warnings and actionable intelligence (Onuoha, 2013; Okereke, 2022).

Taraba State, located in Nigeria's northeast and bordering Cameroon, embodies these contradictions. With its diverse ethnic composition, difficult terrain, and history of communal strife, Taraba has experienced recurrent farmer-herder clashes, kidnappings, and banditry. Yet its security architecture remains largely top-down, reliant on overstretched federal forces, with limited integration of community knowledge systems (Nwagboso, 2021). The consequences are severe: repeated massacres, displacement, and economic decline.

This article therefore aims to examine the intelligence gap in Taraba State through the following specific objectives:

- i. Examine the nature and causes of security challenges in Taraba State;
- ii. Assess the structural and operational limitations affecting intelligence gathering in the state; and
- iii. Evaluate the effectiveness of the state's security response mechanisms and identify the necessary reforms for improving security management.

## **Literature Review**

### **Intelligence Gap**

Recent scholarship conceptualizes the *intelligence gap* as a critical weakness within security and intelligence systems, arising not merely from the absence of information but from the inability of institutions to transform available data into timely and actionable intelligence. Scholars increasingly agree that intelligence gaps reflect deeper structural, analytical, and institutional failures rather than simple information shortages.

Menkveld (2021) views the intelligence gap as a product of the growing *complexity of intelligence problems*, arguing that contemporary security threats evolve faster than the analytical and organizational capacities of intelligence institutions. According to this perspective, intelligence agencies may possess large volumes of data, yet still suffer from intelligence gaps when analytical frameworks are inadequate to interpret complex threat environments. This view shifts the debate from intelligence collection to intelligence cognition and problem-solving, emphasizing that gaps emerge when analytical capacity fails to match threat complexity.

Expanding on this analytical dimension, Warner and McDonald (2022) argue that intelligence gaps often stem from breakdowns within the intelligence cycle, particularly at the stages of analysis and dissemination. They contend that intelligence failures are frequently the result of poor synthesis of information and ineffective communication between intelligence producers and policy decision-makers. From this standpoint, the intelligence gap is reinforced when intelligence products are either delayed, overly technical, or misaligned with the needs of security managers, rendering available intelligence operationally irrelevant.

In the context of developing states, scholars place stronger emphasis on structural and institutional constraints. Nte and Eyororokumoh (2025), in their study of intelligence management in Nigeria, conceptualize the intelligence gap as an outcome of weak inter-agency collaboration, politicization of intelligence processes, and limited technological capacity. They argue that intelligence gaps persist where intelligence agencies operate in isolation, resulting in

fragmented information flows and duplicated efforts. This fragmentation undermines the development of a comprehensive threat picture and weakens coordinated security responses. Similarly, Adegboyega et al. (2024) view the intelligence gap through the lens of operational limitations, particularly the overreliance on human intelligence (HUMINT) and the neglect of technical intelligence capabilities such as signals intelligence and geospatial intelligence. They argue that this imbalance restricts the depth and accuracy of threat assessment, especially in environments characterized by asymmetric and networked security threats. In this sense, the intelligence gap reflects not only institutional weaknesses but also methodological rigidity in intelligence practice.

Other scholars emphasize the socio-political dimensions of intelligence gaps. Ahmed and Salihu (2023) contend that mistrust between communities and security agencies significantly widens intelligence gaps, particularly in conflict-prone regions. They argue that intelligence systems depend heavily on civilian cooperation, and where public trust is eroded by perceptions of abuse or inefficiency, intelligence gathering becomes shallow and unreliable. This perspective situates the intelligence gap within broader civil-military relations and governance dynamics.

### **Community Collaboration**

Community collaboration in security refers to the cooperative engagement between formal security agencies and local communities in addressing safety challenges, sharing information, and co-developing solutions. Scholars such as Sule (2025) define it as a partnership-oriented approach where communities actively participate in identifying security problems and shaping policing priorities. This perspective emphasizes that collaboration is not merely about information sharing but about building trust, fostering accountability, and creating joint ownership of security outcomes, thereby enhancing both the legitimacy and effectiveness of security institutions.

Other researchers emphasize the operational and intelligence aspects of community collaboration. Longinus (2024) highlights the importance of community-derived intelligence, where local knowledge and insights are integrated into formal security processes to improve threat detection and response. Okpa and Tyover (2024) further argue that collaboration transforms citizens from passive observers into active security partners, facilitating problem-solving and enhancing interagency coordination. Empirical studies, such as Adelan et al. (2023), demonstrate that effective collaboration relies on structured communication channels, integration of informal security actors, and sustained engagement to ensure that community contributions are systematically incorporated into security planning and operations.

Despite its recognized benefits, scholars also note significant challenges to effective community collaboration. Trust deficits, misaligned priorities, and institutional rigidities can hinder cooperation, limiting the operational impact of collaborative initiatives (Alehegn et al., 2025). Moreover, the success of community collaboration is highly context-dependent, influenced by local social dynamics, governance structures, and resource availability. Overall, the literature frames community collaboration as a multidimensional process that combines partnership, intelligence sharing, and joint problem-solving, while highlighting that its effectiveness depends on both institutional commitment and active community engagement.

### **State Response**

Security governance in Nigeria has increasingly moved beyond reliance on federal law enforcement to include decentralized and community-oriented responses, reflecting the limitations of conventional policing in environments plagued by banditry, kidnapping, and violent crime. Broadly, scholars argue that formal security agencies alone are insufficient to manage localized insecurity, necessitating supplementary mechanisms that engage local populations and non-state actors (Nweke & Nwankwo, 2023). In Taraba State, this theoretical trend aligns with calls for *community policing* frameworks that emphasize collaboration between citizens and formal security institutions to improve intelligence gathering, trust, and responsiveness (Sabo, 2025). Community policing literature underscores that mutual cooperation between residents and law enforcement strengthens social capital and enhances security outcomes, whereas weak collaboration perpetuates mistrust and undermines state capacity to address emerging threats effectively.

Within this broad community-oriented perspective, vigilante groups have emerged as critical non-state security actors in Taraba State's security landscape. Empirical research in Jalingo Local Government Area demonstrates that vigilante groups contribute significantly to crime reduction by leveraging local knowledge and rapid response capabilities, especially in reducing street crimes, burglaries, and other forms of criminality that formal security agencies struggle to address due to logistical constraints and manpower shortages (Moses, Adaki & Idi, 2025). However, the literature also highlights structural challenges faced by these groups, such as inadequate training, lack of formal recognition, and legal ambiguities that complicate their integration into broader security governance frameworks (Moses et al., 2025). These findings are consistent with national studies showing that vigilante groups often emerge when state actors are unable to meet community security needs, but their effectiveness depends on coordination, regulation, and linkage to formal security systems.

State responses in Taraba State also include efforts to institutionalize cooperative frameworks between formal state actors and community-based security agents. Research on non-state security actors in Taraba reveals that organizations such as neighborhood watch groups, vigilantes, and local militias can enhance security governance when structured under official frameworks that provide training in human rights, surveillance, and intelligence gathering (Agwanwo & Lawal, 2025). The study emphasizes that the state's role is not only to sanction these actors but also to create structured partnerships that balance autonomy with oversight, thereby reducing risks of unregulated violence and accountability gaps. This theoretical orientation reflects broader debates about *hybrid security governance*, where states and communities co-produce security through negotiated authority and shared responsibilities.

Despite the potential benefits of vigilante and community-based security collaborations, scholars warn about institutional and social challenges that undermine these interventions. Studies of vigilante proliferation in Nigeria suggest that without adequate state oversight, inclusivity, and formal legal frameworks, such groups may exacerbate insecurity or operate with impunity, leading to human rights concerns and fragmented authority (Paki & Rufus, 2023). Furthermore, research on community policing in Taraba highlights persistent barriers including lack of trust, poor engagement, and resource constraints that weaken the potential of

collaborative security strategies to deliver sustainable outcomes (Sabo, 2025). Together, these insights illustrate that while Taraba State's responses through vigilante integration and informal security participation reflect important adaptations to endemic insecurity, their long-term effectiveness hinges on formal institutional support, accountability mechanisms, and deeper community-state engagement to align grassroots action with broader governance objectives

### **Security Challenges in Nigeria**

Security challenges in Nigeria have been variously defined by scholars depending on their disciplinary and analytical orientations. According to Okoli and Ugwu (2020), security challenges refer to the multiplicity of threats that undermine the stability of the Nigerian state, including terrorism, banditry, communal violence, and political instability. Similarly, Ezeani (2021) defines Nigeria's security challenges as systemic threats to the protection of lives and property arising from weak governance structures and the erosion of state legitimacy. From a broader perspective, Adebayo (2022) views Nigeria's insecurity as a manifestation of deep-seated socio-economic inequalities, poor leadership, and institutional decay that foster violence and crime. These definitions collectively suggest that Nigeria's security crisis transcends mere physical violence and reflects a crisis of governance and state capacity.

Different scholars have also examined the nature and dimensions of security challenges in Nigeria from varied perspectives. While Musa and Danjuma (2020) highlight terrorism and insurgency in the Northeast as the most dominant form of insecurity, Yusuf (2021) argues that the rise of armed banditry and kidnapping in the Northwest and North-Central regions now poses an equal or even greater threat to national security. In contrast, Nwosu and Ibrahim (2023) focus on the Niger Delta region, where militancy and oil theft continue to challenge economic security. These studies reveal that Nigeria's insecurity is multifaceted and region-specific, yet interconnected through shared drivers such as poverty, unemployment, and the proliferation of small arms. This implies that insecurity in Nigeria is not merely a regional problem but a national phenomenon rooted in structural governance deficiencies.

The security challenges in Nigeria are characterized by persistent insurgency, armed banditry, herder-farmer conflicts, secessionist agitations, and cybercrime, all of which have combined to erode citizens' trust in state institutions. Studies by Ali and Okafor (2022) and Bello (2023) indicate that these threats have devastating consequences for human security, economic growth, and social cohesion. Furthermore, weak intelligence coordination, corruption in the security sector, and poor community engagement have limited the effectiveness of state responses (Ene & Abubakar, 2023). Consequently, contemporary scholarship calls for a holistic security strategy that integrates socio-economic reforms, youth empowerment, and inclusive governance to mitigate Nigeria's complex security crisis (Ibrahim & Garba, 2024).

### **Security Community Collaboration**

In addressing Nigeria's complex security challenges, scholars increasingly emphasize the importance of security-community collaboration as a critical strategy for sustainable peace and stability. According to Ene and Abubakar (2023), the state's overreliance on military and police operations has yielded limited success because it often neglects the vital role of communities in intelligence gathering, early warning, and conflict prevention. Adebayo (2022) similarly argues that security operations become more effective when local actors traditional rulers, vigilante

groups, civil society organizations, and community leaders are integrated into security frameworks. This collaborative approach enhances trust, facilitates information flow, and helps tailor responses to local realities.

Musa and Danjuma (2020) contend that local participation in security governance fosters ownership and accountability, reducing the perception of state coercion and alienation in vulnerable communities. In regions affected by insurgency and banditry, community-based surveillance networks and joint security committees have proven instrumental in detecting threats early and supporting formal agencies in intelligence sharing (Yusuf, 2021). However, Okoli and Ugwu (2020) caution that such collaboration must be properly institutionalized and regulated to avoid human rights abuses and the politicization of local vigilante groups.

Recent studies therefore advocate a shift from purely reactive security measures to proactive, community-centered strategies. Bello (2023) and Ibrahim and Garba (2024) argue that fostering mutual trust between state security agencies and local communities can rebuild confidence in governance and strengthen social cohesion. Effective collaboration should thus involve capacity-building for community actors, transparent communication channels, and inclusive decision-making. Ultimately, security–community collaboration provides a sustainable pathway for mitigating Nigeria’s multifaceted security crises by bridging the gap between formal institutions and the grassroots.

### **Community Collaboration and Local Intelligence Ecosystem in Nigeria**

The growing insecurity across Nigeria has renewed scholarly attention on the importance of community collaboration and the development of a local intelligence ecosystem as a cornerstone of effective internal security management. Ene and Abubakar (2023) observe that the Nigerian security architecture has historically been state-centric, relying heavily on military and paramilitary operations with minimal civilian input. This top-down approach, however, has proven insufficient in addressing evolving threats such as banditry, insurgency, and kidnapping. Adebayo (2022) argues that community collaboration defined as the systematic engagement of local actors in security planning and intelligence sharing enhances situational awareness, improves trust between citizens and security agencies, and promotes early warning systems that are critical in preventing attacks. Thus, the integration of community structures into security governance is not merely supplementary but fundamental to achieving sustainable peace and stability.

Musa and Danjuma (2020) emphasize that the local intelligence ecosystem in Nigeria functions most effectively when it harnesses indigenous knowledge and social networks that are inaccessible to formal security institutions. Traditional leaders, religious figures, and vigilante groups often possess firsthand information on suspicious movements, criminal hideouts, and community tensions. When such intelligence is properly channeled to formal agencies, it leads to proactive responses and a reduction in violent incidents (Yusuf, 2021). Nevertheless, Okoli and Ugwu (2020) warn that informal intelligence gathering without institutional oversight can lead to abuses, misinformation, or the victimization of innocent citizens. Therefore, there is a growing consensus that intelligence collaboration must be structured within clear legal frameworks and accountability mechanisms that protect human rights and promote professionalism.

Recent research has shown that successful counter-insurgency and anti-banditry operations in Nigeria have increasingly relied on localized intelligence and trust-based cooperation between communities and formal security forces (Bello, 2023; Ibrahim & Garba, 2024). Community policing initiatives and joint security task forces in parts of the North-West and North-East have improved intelligence flows and strengthened community resilience. However, challenges such as corruption, lack of coordination, and inadequate protection for community informants continue to hinder effectiveness (Ezeani, 2021). Strengthening the local intelligence ecosystem, therefore, requires capacity-building for community actors, investment in communication technologies, and the establishment of secure information-sharing protocols. As scholars note, empowering communities to act as co-producers of security rather than passive beneficiaries will significantly enhance Nigeria's ability to anticipate, prevent, and respond to emerging security threats (Ali & Okafor, 2022).

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical foundation of this study is anchored on the Social Disorganization Theory, originally propounded by Clifford R. Shaw and Henry D. McKay in 1942 as part of the Chicago School of Sociology. Their work examined urban neighborhoods in Chicago and observed that crime and disorder were more prevalent in communities marked by poverty, residential instability, and ethnic heterogeneity, not because of individual traits but because of the breakdown of social controls and collective efficacy. The basic assumptions of the theory are that when traditional social institutions such as family, religion, and community structures are weakened, communities lose the capacity to regulate behavior and maintain social order; that socioeconomic deprivation, population turnover, and cultural diversity reduce social cohesion and trust, making informal surveillance and cooperation less effective; and that crime and insecurity are less about individual choices and more about the broader structural and environmental contexts in which people live. Despite its wide use, the theory has been criticized on several grounds. One key criticism is that it tends to overemphasize structural and environmental factors while underestimating the role of individual agency, cultural influences, and the strategic choices of actors in shaping patterns of insecurity. Another criticism is that the theory was developed in a Western, urban context and therefore requires adaptation when applied to non-Western societies and rural environments, where traditional communal structures and informal governance mechanisms often play stronger roles than in modern urban settings. Despite these criticisms, the theory is particularly relevant to Taraba State, where the persistence of insecurity can be traced to social fragmentation, ethnic rivalries, economic deprivation, and the erosion of community-based systems of regulation and conflict resolution. The recurring farmer herder clashes, communal conflicts, and the mistrust between citizens and state institutions reflect a breakdown of mutual accountability and informal surveillance, which in turn has created an intelligence vacuum exploited by armed groups and criminal networks. By applying Social Disorganization Theory, this study explains why insecurity persists in Taraba despite the presence of formal security agencies, highlighting that without rebuilding community cohesion, strengthening local institutions, and integrating grassroots actors into security governance, state interventions will remain reactive, militarized, and ultimately unsustainable.

### **Methodology**

This study employed a qualitative research design, relying exclusively on secondary data to examine the dynamics of insecurity, intelligence gaps, and state responses in Taraba State. Relevant data were sourced from academic publications, policy documents, government reports, and credible media investigations covering the period between 2014 and 2024, a decade that witnessed escalating communal violence, farmer-herder clashes, and the rise of organized criminality in the state. The analysis was thematically structured in line with the objectives of the study, focusing on three broad areas: the nature of security challenges in Taraba, the structural and operational limitations of intelligence gathering, and the effectiveness of state response mechanisms. Thematic analysis was applied to synthesize insights across multiple sources, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the complex interactions between community-level dynamics, institutional weaknesses, and security governance. By drawing on diverse perspectives and triangulating evidence, the methodology provided a robust basis for analyzing the persistent intelligence gap and its implications for sustainable peace and security in Taraba State.

### **Nature and Drivers of Security Challenges in Taraba State**

The security challenges confronting Taraba State are multifaceted, reflecting a combination of ethno-religious, socio-economic, and political factors. The state has been one of the major theatres of violent conflicts in Nigeria's Middle Belt, with recurrent Tiv-Jukun communal clashes representing a long-standing ethno-political rivalry between the two dominant ethnic groups in Wukari and its environs. According to Akwen and Yusuf (2021), the Tiv-Jukun conflict is sustained by disputes over land ownership, political representation, and traditional authority, often escalating into large-scale violence that displaces thousands. Similarly, farmer-herder conflicts have intensified across Taraba's central and northern zones, particularly in Bali, Takum, and Donga Local Government Areas, where competition over farmlands and grazing routes has led to repeated attacks and reprisals (Okoli & Atelhe, 2020). Beyond communal clashes, Taraba has witnessed a sharp rise in kidnapping for ransom, armed robbery, cultism, and politically motivated violence, especially during election periods. Reports by the Nigeria Security Tracker (2023) highlight several incidents of abductions and killings in Jalingo and Wukari, underscoring the increasing criminalization of violence in the state.

The drivers of insecurity in Taraba are largely rooted in structural socio-economic conditions such as poverty, unemployment, and weak governance. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2022) in its *Multidimensional Poverty Index* reported that about 79.4% of Taraba's population is multidimensionally poor, placing it among the top ten poorest states in Nigeria. The dimensions of deprivation include poor access to education, healthcare, and improved living conditions, which heighten social vulnerability and reduce community resilience. Furthermore, although the NBS Labour Force Survey (2023) recorded a low headline unemployment rate of 1.9% for Taraba State, this figure masks widespread underemployment and informal economic activity, meaning that many people are engaged in low-paying, precarious jobs. As Bello (2023) observes, poverty and underemployment create fertile ground for the recruitment of youths into violent groups, including armed militias and kidnapping syndicates, who exploit local grievances for economic gain.

Empirical evidence further suggests that these socio-economic weaknesses intersect with weak institutional capacity and poor conflict management mechanisms. According to Ene and Abubakar (2023), the limited presence of state security institutions in rural areas of Taraba, combined with corruption and inadequate intelligence coordination, allows non-state actors such as vigilante groups, militias, and criminal gangs to fill the security vacuum. This has not only blurred the boundary between state and non-state violence but also entrenched cycles of reprisal and mistrust among communities. Consequently, the nature of insecurity in Taraba State cannot be understood merely as a product of ethnic tension or criminality, but rather as an outcome of deep socio-economic deprivation and governance fragility. Addressing these drivers requires an integrated approach that combines poverty reduction, employment creation, and inclusive governance with strengthened community-based peacebuilding mechanisms.

### **Structural and Operational Limitations of Intelligence Gathering in Taraba State**

The effectiveness of intelligence gathering in Taraba State, as in much of Nigeria, is constrained by deep-rooted structural and operational limitations that weaken the capacity of security institutions to prevent or respond effectively to emerging threats. One of the most pervasive challenges is political interference in security operations. Ene and Abubakar (2023) observe that intelligence agencies in Nigeria often operate under the influence of political elites who manipulate security priorities for partisan or ethnic advantage. In Taraba State, this interference manifests through the politicization of appointments in local security committees and the selective deployment of forces during communal or political crises, particularly in areas such as Wukari, Takum, and Jalingo. As Bello (2023) notes, such political manipulation undermines operational independence, erodes public trust, and discourages timely intelligence sharing among community actors. Consequently, intelligence becomes fragmented, biased, and reactive rather than proactive.

Another critical limitation is insufficient funding and poor logistics, which hinder intelligence collection, surveillance, and rapid response. The National Security Budget Report (2022) revealed that Nigeria's subnational security operations, including those in Taraba, receive less than 5% of the total national security allocation, leaving local commands ill-equipped to conduct sustained intelligence operations. Adebayo (2022) explains that the absence of modern surveillance technologies, inadequate communication tools, and limited mobility for operatives severely constrains the ability to gather and analyze actionable intelligence in remote or conflict-prone areas such as Karim Lamido and Donga. This funding gap also affects the welfare and morale of personnel, leading to lapses in professionalism and commitment. Furthermore, corruption and compromise within security agencies remain persistent structural weaknesses. Okoli and Ugwu (2020) argue that intelligence operatives in Nigeria are often susceptible to bribery, ethnic bias, or political influence, resulting in the deliberate suppression or distortion of security information. In Taraba, cases of security officers leaking information to criminal elements or aiding escape have been documented in reports by the Nigeria Security Tracker (2023), illustrating how corruption corrodes institutional integrity.

Equally significant is the problem of poor interagency coordination, which has long hampered intelligence operations in Taraba State. Ibrahim and Garba (2024) explain that the absence of a unified command structure and data-sharing protocol among the police, military, civil defense,

and state security services creates duplication of efforts and operational gaps that criminals exploit. Instances where the police and vigilante groups act independently without sharing intelligence have contributed to delayed responses during attacks or kidnappings in local communities. Musa and Danjuma (2020) assert that the rivalry among agencies fosters secrecy rather than collaboration, which weakens collective security outcomes. The combination of these structural and operational weaknesses political interference, underfunding, corruption, and poor coordination ultimately limits the development of a coherent intelligence ecosystem in Taraba State. Addressing these challenges requires depoliticizing security institutions, enhancing funding transparency, establishing interagency intelligence fusion centers, and promoting accountability through community-based oversight mechanisms.

### **Effectiveness of Taraba State Government Response Mechanism in Addressing the State Security Challenges**

The Taraba State Government has in recent years adopted a range of response mechanisms aimed at mitigating the growing security challenges in the state. These efforts have largely been framed within the context of addressing both the symptoms and root causes of insecurity particularly unemployment, poverty, and weak intelligence coordination. According to Ibrahim and Garba (2024), the state's strategy aligns with Nigeria's broader security decentralization framework, emphasizing community-based approaches and interagency collaboration. One of the most notable interventions by the Taraba State Government has been the appointment of hundreds of youths as Special Advisers and Senior Special Assistants, a policy designed to reduce unemployment and curb the lure of violent or criminal engagement among young people. This initiative is both a political and social response to youth restiveness, as unemployment and underemployment remain major drivers of insecurity in the state. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2023) reports that despite national improvements in employment data, a large proportion of Taraba's workforce remains underemployed and informally engaged. Thus, the state's youth employment policy, though modest, represents an attempt to convert a vulnerable demographic into agents of stability and governance participation (Ali & Okafor, 2022).

In terms of direct security intervention, the Taraba State Government established a Joint Integrated Intelligence Network (JIIN) across its sixteen local government areas, which aims to enhance intelligence sharing among local vigilante groups, traditional leaders, and formal security agencies. Ene and Abubakar (2023) highlight that this model mirrors community policing frameworks adopted in states such as Kaduna and Plateau, focusing on localized intelligence flows and rapid community-level response. This initiative has reportedly improved communication between communities and law enforcement, especially in conflict-prone areas such as Wukari, Takum, and Bali, where early warning reports have helped prevent escalations of communal clashes. However, Bello (2023) argues that while the JIIN has improved information flow, its operational sustainability is limited by poor logistics, inadequate funding, and inconsistent interagency cooperation. Furthermore, the network's effectiveness is sometimes undermined by the persistence of political interference and mistrust between informal and formal security actors, which delays timely decision-making.

Beyond intelligence coordination, the state government has also pursued peacebuilding and humanitarian interventions, particularly in post-conflict areas affected by Tiv–Jukun crises and farmer–herder clashes. Through the Taraba State Peacebuilding Bureau and partnerships with civil society organizations, reconciliation meetings and community dialogues have been organized to rebuild trust among divided communities (Ezeani, 2021). These efforts complement security reforms by addressing the social dimensions of conflict. Nonetheless, as Adebayo (2022) observes, the long-term effectiveness of such response mechanisms depends on institutional consistency, adequate funding, and the depoliticization of security operations. Overall, while Taraba State’s approach reflects commendable steps toward integrating youth empowerment, intelligence coordination, and peacebuilding, the sustainability of these efforts requires deeper structural reforms that strengthen accountability, institutional trust, and the professionalization of the security sector.

### **Discussion of Findings**

On the nature and drivers of security challenges in Taraba State, the work finds out that insecurity in the state is multidimensional and deeply rooted in both socio-economic and ethno-political contexts. The findings reveal that the major forms of insecurity include the Tiv–Jukun communal conflict, recurrent farmer–herder clashes, kidnapping, armed robbery, cultism, and politically motivated violence concentrated in areas such as Wukari, Takum, Bali, and Donga. These forms of violence are sustained not merely by ethnic mistrust but by structural vulnerabilities like poverty, unemployment, and inequality. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2022), about 79.4% of Taraba’s population is multidimensionally poor, while the 2023 Labour Force Survey shows high levels of underemployment despite a low headline unemployment rate. This socio-economic fragility fuels crime and communal grievances, as many unemployed youths are drawn into militias and criminal gangs for survival (Bello, 2023; Adebayo, 2022). The findings therefore align with Okoli and Atelhe’s (2020) assertion that socio-economic deprivation and resource competition are the fundamental triggers of violent conflict across Nigeria’s Middle Belt, including Taraba State.

On the structural and operational limitations of intelligence gathering in Taraba State, the work finds out that political interference, insufficient funding, corruption, and poor interagency coordination have significantly reduced the efficiency of intelligence operations. The analysis shows that political actors often influence security priorities and appointments, compromising neutrality and professionalism in intelligence management. Insufficient funding and poor logistics have also crippled the ability of security agencies to sustain surveillance and early warning operations, particularly in rural flashpoints (National Security Budget Report, 2022). Furthermore, corruption within some security agencies undermines the credibility of intelligence work, as operatives sometimes leak information or take bribes from suspects, eroding public trust (Okoli & Ugwu, 2020; Ene & Abubakar, 2023). Poor interagency coordination further weakens the sharing of actionable intelligence between the police, the DSS, and local vigilante groups, leading to duplication of effort and delayed responses. These findings are consistent with Musa and Danjuma’s (2020) observation that the absence of an integrated command structure and intelligence fusion centers in Nigeria’s security framework continues to impede operational effectiveness in states like Taraba.

On the effectiveness of the Taraba State Government's response mechanism, the work finds out that although the government has made commendable strides in tackling insecurity, its interventions remain partially effective due to structural and sustainability challenges. The study identifies two major initiatives the employment of youths as Special Advisers and Senior Assistants to reduce unemployment-driven insecurity, and the establishment of a Joint Integrated Intelligence Network (JIIN) across all sixteen local government areas to improve intelligence sharing. These efforts have fostered local engagement and reduced communal suspicion in some conflict-prone areas (Ene & Abubakar, 2023). However, the findings reveal that the impact of these initiatives is limited by inadequate funding, political patronage, and weak coordination between formal security agencies and community actors (Bello, 2023). While the peacebuilding interventions and youth employment programs show political will to address insecurity, their long-term success depends on institutionalizing them beyond political cycles and ensuring that security governance is transparent, inclusive, and community-driven (Ibrahim & Garba, 2024; Ali & Okafor, 2022). Overall, the government's mechanisms demonstrate progress toward proactive security governance but require deeper structural reforms for sustainable peace in Taraba State.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the study reveals that insecurity in Taraba State is a complex outcome of intertwined socio-economic, political, and institutional factors. The findings show that the nature and drivers of insecurity manifested through communal conflicts, farmer–herder clashes, kidnapping, and political violence are deeply rooted in poverty, unemployment, and economic deprivation, which continue to fuel social tension and criminal activity. The structural and operational limitations of intelligence gathering, particularly political interference, poor funding, corruption, and weak interagency coordination, have further constrained effective security responses and early warning mechanisms. Although the Taraba State Government's response mechanisms, including youth employment initiatives and the establishment of a Joint Integrated Intelligence Network, represent important strides toward inclusive and community-based security governance, their impact remains limited by sustainability and institutional weaknesses. Therefore, lasting peace and stability in Taraba State will depend on strengthening institutional integrity, addressing socio-economic inequalities, depoliticizing security structures, and promoting genuine collaboration between government, security agencies, and local communities to build a more resilient and intelligence-driven security architecture.

### **Recommendations**

- i. To address the socio-economic drivers of insecurity, the government should expand its youth employment initiatives beyond political appointments by investing in vocational training, entrepreneurship support, and agricultural value-chain programs. This will provide sustainable livelihoods, reduce the vulnerability of youths to recruitment by violent groups, and improve social stability
- ii. The government, in collaboration with traditional rulers, religious leaders, and civil society organizations, should strengthen community peace committees and conflict resolution platforms at the local government level. This will enhance grassroots trust,

- facilitate intelligence sharing, and promote long-term reconciliation among ethnic and religious groups in conflict-prone areas like Wukari, Takum, and Donga
- iii. The Taraba State Government should establish a well-funded, depoliticized, and technology-driven intelligence coordination center to integrate information from the police, DSS, and community security networks. This will improve early warning, enhance interagency collaboration, and reduce duplication of efforts caused by poor coordination and political interference.

## References

- Adebayo, R. (2022). *Governance and insecurity in Nigeria: A socio-political analysis*. *African Security Review*, 31(4), 451-466.
- Adegboyega, T., Ojo, K., & Musa, J. (2024). *Operational limitations and the intelligence gap in modern security environments*. *African Journal of Intelligence and Security Studies*, 10(1), 78-99.
- Adelan, F., Okoro, P., & Chukwu, T. (2023). *Community policing and collaborative security management in Abuja, Nigeria*. *International Journal of Security and Policing Studies*, 7(2), 45-63.
- Agwanwo, D. E., & Lawal, R. (2025). *Non-state security actors and security governance in Taraba State*. *Middle East Research Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*.
- Ahmed, A., & Salihu, M. (2023). *Mistrust and intelligence effectiveness in conflict-prone regions*. *Journal of Security and Intelligence Studies*, 5(2), 45-64.
- Akwen, T., & Yusuf, S. (2021). *Ethno-political dimensions of the Tiv-Jukun conflict in Taraba State, Nigeria*. *Journal of Peace and Conflict Studies*, 8 (2), 101-116.
- Alehegn, A., Bekele, M., & Tadesse, L. (2025). *Community-based policing and public safety in Addis Ababa: Opportunities and challenges*. *Journal of African Security Studies*, 12(1), 77-95.
- Ali, M., & Okafor, C. (2022). *Human security and violent extremism in Nigeria*. *Journal of African Peace and Security Studies*, 9(2), 89-104.
- Aning, K., & Pokoo, J. (2014). *Understanding the nature and threats of violent extremist groups in the Sahel and West Africa*. West Africa Commission on Drugs (WACD).
- Bello, T. (2023). *Economic consequences of insecurity in Nigeria*. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 41(3), 210-225.
- Ene, A., & Abubakar, L. (2023). *State response and security sector governance in Nigeria*. *Security Studies Quarterly*, 7(1), 45-61.
- Ezeani, E. (2021). *Weak governance and Nigeria's insecurity dilemma*. *Nigerian Journal of Political Science*, 28(1), 33-49.
- Ibrahim, Y., & Garba, M. (2024). *Inclusive governance as a pathway to sustainable security in Nigeria*. *African Journal of Public Policy*, 16 (2), 120-135.
- Longinus, O. (2024). *Harnessing community intelligence for security governance: Integrating local knowledge into formal policing*. *African Journal of Intelligence Studies*, 10(3), 101-121.
- Menkveld, C. (2021). *Understanding the complexity of intelligence problems*. *Intelligence and National Security*, 36(5), 621-641.
- Moses, A. E., Adaki, A. Y., & Idi, M. (2025). *Assessing the effectiveness of vigilante groups in reducing crime rates in Jalingo LGA, Taraba State, Nigeria*. *International Journal of Academic Multidisciplinary Research*.
- Musa, S., & Danjuma, A. (2020). *Insurgency and the crisis of internal security in Nigeria*. *International Journal of Security Studies*, 5(3), 77-91.

- National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). (2022). *Nigeria Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) 2022: Summary Report*. Abuja: NBS.
- National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). (2023). *Nigeria Labour Force Survey (NLFS) Q4 2023*. Abuja: NBS.
- National Security Budget Report. (2022). *Analysis of security sector funding in Nigeria*. Abuja: Centre for Public Policy and Governance.
- Nigeria Security Tracker. (2023). *Incident data on killings, kidnappings, and communal violence in Taraba State (2020–2023)*. Council on Foreign Relations.
- Nte, N. D., & Eyororokumoh, B. R. (2025). Strategic intelligence management and law enforcement in Nigeria: Fixing the gaps. *Politics & Security, 13*(3), 5-23.
- Nwagboso, C. I. (2021). Insecurity and the challenges of development in Nigeria's North-East region. *International Journal of Security Studies, 7*(1), 45-63.
- Nwagboso, O., & Nwagboso, C. (2021). Human intelligence and community security in Nigeria. *Journal of Intelligence and National Security, 36*(4), 322-339.
- Nweke, K., & Nwankwo, E. O. (2023). *Community policing and security challenges in Nigeria*. *South East Political Science Review*.
- Nwosu, J., & Ibrahim, B. (2023). *Militancy and oil theft in Nigeria's Niger Delta*. *Energy Policy and Security Journal, 8*(2), 56-70.
- Okereke, N. (2022). Community-based intelligence and national security in Nigeria: Prospects and pitfalls. *Journal of African Security Studies, 10*(3), 205-222.
- Okoli, A., & Atelhe, G. (2020). *Farmer–herder conflict and the crisis of internal security in Taraba State*. *African Journal of Governance and Development, 9* (1), 45-59.
- Okoli, A., & Ugwu, K. (2020). *Security governance and the challenge of state fragility in Nigeria*. *African Journal of Governance and Development, 9* (1), 1-16.
- Okpa, C., & Tyover, S. (2024). *Transforming citizen roles: Community collaboration in contemporary policing*. *Journal of Security and Society, 8*(2).
- Onuoha, F. C. (2013). Intelligence-led policing and Nigeria's internal security: The imperative of local policing. *The Nigerian Forum, 34*(3), 29-42.
- Paki, F. A. E., & Rufus, A. (2023). *The proliferation of armed vigilante groups in Nigeria: Tacit or official endorsement*. *Journal of Global Social Sciences*.
- Sabo, G. S. (2025). *Community policing and security challenges in Taraba State*. *Taraba International Journal of Social Sciences Research*.
- Sule, D. (2025). *Community policing and partnership in crime prevention*. *Journal of Police Studies, 15*(1), 30-50.
- Warner, M., & McDonald, S. (2022). *Breakdowns in the intelligence cycle and the reinforcement of intelligence gaps*. *International Journal of Intelligence Studies, 18*(4), 211-234.
- Williams, P. D. (2016). *War and conflict in Africa* (2nd ed.). Polity Press.
- Yusuf, I. (2021). *Banditry, kidnapping, and human insecurity in Northern Nigeria*. *Conflict Trends, 2021*(3), 34-46.